

brated and *great* by her many copies of Correggio's Magdalen. Certainly, never did greatness acquiesce in itself with an air of milder and more gracious self-appreciation than in the demeanour of this venerable lady, who has seated herself in the middle of the vale of years in a very stately way. Our last search, it only remains to be added, was for copies in marble of sculpture; but now one's leisure was drawing to a close; and on my last day at Florence, there were only a few moments for him just to *run* with me through two or three studios, and mark with stealthy and rapid crosses in pencil those figures on which my esteemed approbation had time to alight. And so we parted, with a hope of mine that his success had not been the less for such aid as I could give him; for Mæcenas, even in his humblest shape, is an object for respect and tenderness. But oh! into whose Art leading-strings did he happen to fall next; that is the question I have since sometimes asked myself, with uneasy imaginary replies.

THE GERMAN TOY MANUFACTURE.

FLEISCHMANN OF SONNEBERG.

MANY years have not elapsed since all kinds of Art-manufactures, intended for the cheaper markets, or for the use of children, were constructed with a determined ugliness, which really went out of its way to compose distortions and caricatures, as if such evils were necessary parts of an extensive trade. In this way the cottages of the poor, and the play-rooms of children, were filled with a curiously-hideous group of monstrosities, yet seriously purporting to represent something familiar to us all. The old delf images of horses and cows, with sun-flowers and daisies painted all over their bodies, were even more natural than the animals constructed in the old English potteries, which decorated the mantelpieces of our grandmothers; or, than the plaster parrots and cats which succeeded them. If adults fared thus badly, the children were supplied with toy animals whose resemblance to nature was of the remotest kind. A "Noah's Ark" was the glory of childhood—a treasure not enough to be appreciated; it was a pleasure to unpack, a delight to puzzle over. If it was never quite clear which was the dog, and which the bear, and an enigma few could solve, whether the cat was not the tiger; while dozens of other creatures were "given up" in despair, and taken on trust as representations of somethings existing somewhere. There were no Zoological Gardens then to refer to, and the picture-books were but a grade better, as authorities, than the old Dutch Noah's Ark. Artists then would not condescend to do anything for children; they were consequently left to their own ignorance, made still denser by what was put before them.

The present generation of little folk have advantages they wot not of. They must grow a little older ere they can discover the strides that have been made during the last quarter of a century in that important branch of silent education—the education of the eye. Our best artists now do not disdain to draw for children's books; and so necessary do we deem truthfulness and ability, that "the best pencils" of the old days of Mr. Newbery, in St. Paul's Churchyard, would totally fail of gaining employment now; compare those of the great Biblioplist of 1800, with those of his successors, Messrs. Griffith and Farran, in 1860. The first toys put into a baby's hands now, are artistically better than were those given to children of advanced years half a century ago. We owe something of this improvement to Parisian manufacturers, but by far the greater debt is due to the Germans; they not only perfected the work, but supplied it at a rate within the means of all.

The untiring industry and economy of the German people is a marked national characteristic; their patience over labour, and innate ingenuity, are but types of the race. Who has ever travelled in the Black Forest without admiring the energetic ingenuity its native peasantry possess in the pro-

duction of wares by which they live? Our Great Exhibition had no more attractive and beautiful national group of Art-manufactures than Germany brought together; and it exhibited a wide field of action, from the fabrication of the most exquisite article for a boudoir, to the production of a child's toy.

It is not generally known how extensive the manufacture of children's toys in Germany has become, nor the full amount of care and attention that is bestowed on their construction. The best come from one district, Sonneberg, in Saxe Meiningen; and the principal manufacturer there is Adolph Fleischmann, whose works in the Great Exhibition of 1851 excited much attention. In the south-eastern district of the old Thuringian forest are numbers who live by this ingenious trade; and the hereditary Duke, fully aware of the importance of its mercantile improvement, has founded and fitted out schools for the better instruction of the workmen, gathering for their use, books, prints, and models. The workmen are generally bred to the trade; sons improve on fathers' work, and, as in other factories, it is found that some have exclusive ability in a particular branch of manufacture only—a peculiar native facility which, in so large a factory, can be exclusively devoted to its own bias. The use of papier-mâché in place of wood-carving has been the real secret of the great improvement in toys; for a good model in clay or wax being obtained, it could be reproduced in casts by the commonest workmen, women, or children. Another advantage of papier-mâché was its lightness and hollowness—the latter allowing the introduction of simple machinery for movement. The cheapness of good casting triumphed over the commonest carving, and the result has been a continued improvement in German toys, until those of the best class may fairly be considered artistic models of nature, acting as educational agents where such agents can only be introduced—that is, by means of play.

It will be of interest to look a little at the life of this district, which, comprising not more than two geographical square miles, includes Sonneberg and the adjacent small towns. About three-fifths of this space is covered by forests of fir and pine trees, the rest being well-cultivated by the inhabitants. Every toy-maker aims at the possession of a field, for the supply of potatoes, upon which his household chiefly subsists; a goat supplies the family with milk for their coffee, which they have for breakfast, dinner, and supper. In some cases a cow enriches the homestead, which is a real scene of pastoral simplicity. In this district about ten thousand workmen live, comprising plain wood-manufacturers, who make boxes of all kinds, and matches (for which there is a sufficient demand to occupy the greater part of the inhabitants of several villages); wood-turners and carvers in the employ of the papier-mâché toy and doll-makers, as well as papier-mâché casters, bellows-makers, and those who construct wooden toys.

No toy of a good description, composed of wood and papier-mâché, is produced entirely by one maker. For example, a crying doll is made by three or four different people: the doll-maker, who sells his produce to the toy-merchant, requires the assistance of a turner, for the supply of the wooden arms and legs, and a papier-mâché caster for the heads and bodies, as well as an artificer who produces the bellows which makes the doll cry; it is his business to join all these parts together, and paint and dress the little figure. Thus four persons live by this one article alone, although of the simplest kind.

It is curious to observe how cleverly some of these men, who have never had a lesson in drawing or modelling, will represent familiar animals. These models are then used to make sulphur moulds upon, which sulphurs produce the finished casts in papier-mâché. It is only the older toy-makers who thus practise their art,—for about twenty-five years ago the drawing and modelling school we have already alluded to was founded by the reigning Duke for their use; it was supported at his expense, and the charge of two-pence (English) paid for an afternoon lesson. Some of the old toy-makers, not caring to bestow even so much on their children and apprentices, it is now the rule that all manufacturers shall send, under pain of fine, their pupils to the establishment, where proper masters instruct them in modelling, and enable Sonneberg to send out figures that occasionally rival the ceramic works of Dresden or Sèvres.

About two years ago a museum was added to the school by the munificence of the prince, consisting of casts from the best antique and modern statuary, and of vases, cups, and other objects, found at Herculaneum (known as the Zahn'sche Collection); as well as a valuable collection of prints, after the best native and foreign masters. A small fee, of about two shillings a year, not only gives the workman free access to this museum at all times, but the right of borrowing the prints and models it contains, for his own use at home.

It is to this judicious Prince that Sonneberg owes its continued prosperity. The whole district is a hive of industry; and one of its few holidays was made last year, when he again visited the town, and its inhabitants greeted him with one of those trade-processions, which is so curious a feature in Belgian and German industrial life, and in which they allegorically represent the wealth of their district, and rise of their trade. It was a scene of home affection between ruler and people honourable to both.

The humblest art may, by judicious culture, become thus an element of wealth and civilization. A toy is as great a fact to a child as is any truth to a philosopher. The perception of children is by no means so obtuse as their elders may, in their self-complacency, suppose; there are very few children, indeed, who will not appreciate and choose the best constructed toys shown to them; if they obtain them, they will keep them carefully. Now here are two great ends served; good taste fostered or generated, and habits the reverse of slovenly induced. A well-trained child is a pleasure to all, and the training cannot begin too early, or be carried on too carefully through the legitimate means even of its pleasures. If truth is worth teaching in one way, it is equally so in all, and a toy-horse may as well resemble a real horse, as it may some strange conventionalities, that a child must be untruly taught to consider as one. If parents and friends of children were fully aware what great beneficial influence good representative toys have upon the juvenile mind, they would foster correct ideas, by discarding the unfaithful rudenesses of the old toy-shop, and patronizing the correct and often beautiful figures which emanate from the new manufactories.

We have thought it well to bring this subject before our readers at a season of the year when it becomes especially interesting; for how many tens of thousands of young minds will at Christmas be influenced for good or evil by the toys they buy? It is a venerable axiom, that education cannot begin too early: those who visit "the German Fair at the Portland Bazaar," will see at once how many lessons in good Art may be taught by Mr. Fleischmann, even by the comparative "nothings" that are obtained for "pence a piece."

It would be difficult to overrate the value of these good and cheap aids to progress, whose first teachings are in the cradle; often—indeed, generally—the toys that go into the hands of girls and boys, are sufficiently pure in design and good in execution to satisfy the man of refinement—even the sculptor. For such influences, so exercised, we are grateful.

We have, in this brief article, made especial reference to the cheaper class of toys which Mr. Fleischmann produces, and sends forth in quantities almost incredible, and at prices inconceivably low; but some works he produces are of a high order, and comparatively large cost: such are the examples, in terra-cotta, of costumes of many nations and periods; figures that, although but a few inches high, are as admirable as the largest and most perfect productions of the sculptor. They are creations of the same eye and mind that produce the small model of a cat, and the one is as finely modelled and moulded as the other. It is one great advantage arising from this manufactory—an advantage from which no part of the world is debarred—that it presents objects so true to nature that a child may safely learn to draw from any one of them; it is to this we especially direct the attention of our readers, asking from them gratitude to Mr. Fleischmann and his compeers.

The excellent Prince, who has taken this manufacturing town, and its millions of Art issues, under his special guidance and protection, has done well and wisely for his country, but none the less for the Art-cause throughout the World.